Educational Services Provided to Students with Severe Disabilities

As requested by
the Honorable Matt Blunt, Governor
and recommended by the
Missouri State Government Review Commission

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According to the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NDCCD), people with severe disabilities are those who traditionally have been labeled as having severe to profound mental retardation. These people require ongoing, extensive support in more than one major life activity in order to participate in integrated community settings and enjoy the quality of life available to people with fewer or no disabilities. They frequently have additional disabilities, including movement difficulties, sensory losses, and behavior problems.

People with severe or multiple disabilities may exhibit a wide range of characteristics, depending on the combination and severity of disabilities, and the person's age. There are, however, some traits they may share, including:

- Limited speech or communication;
- Difficulty in basic physical mobility;
- Tendency to forget skills through disuse;
- Trouble generalizing skills from one situation to another; and/or
- A need for support in major life activities (e.g., domestic, leisure, community use, vocational).

A variety of medical problems may accompany severe disabilities. Examples include seizures, sensory loss, hydrocephalus, and scoliosis. A multi-disciplinary team consisting of the student's parents, educational specialists, and medical specialists in the areas in which the individual demonstrates problems work together to plan and coordinate necessary services.

Students with severe disabilities are defined in the State of Missouri as those students who generally have significant cognitive deficits as evidenced by one of the two methods described below:

1. The student obtains scores falling **four or more standard deviations below the mean** on standardized measures of cognitive functioning and shows commensurate deficits in at least two areas of adaptive functioning.

    OR

2. The student is not able to respond to any standardized measure of cognitive ability due to a combination of sensory and/or motor impairments, but diagnostic information indicates significant deficits in intellectual and adaptive behavior skills, and the **student requires pervasive level of supports across all life areas**, as defined by the American Association for Mental Retardation (AAMR) classification system.

    The presence of significant cognitive deficits may permeate a student's educational condition so as to render him/her severely disabled. A student with severe or multiple disabilities would evidence the presence of significant cognitive deficits along with one or more of the other educationally disabling conditions.

In the past, students with severe and/or multiple disabilities were routinely excluded from public schools. Since the implementation of Public Law 94-142 (the Education of the Handicapped Act, now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA), public schools now serve large numbers of students with severe and/or multiple disabilities. Educational programming is likely to begin as early as infancy. At that time, as well as later on, the primary focus is upon increasing the child's independence.

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NDCCD) states that in order to be effective, educational programs need to incorporate a variety of components to meet the considerable needs of individuals with severe and/or multiple disabilities. Programs should assess needs in four major areas: domestic, leisure/recreational, community, and vocational. These assessments enable the identification of functional objectives (objectives which will result in the learner's increased skill and independence in dealing with the routine activities of his/her life). Instruction should include: Expression of choice; communication; functional skill development; and age-appropriate social skills training.

Related services are of great importance, and the multidisciplinary approach is crucial. Appropriate people such as speech and language therapists, physical and occupational therapists, and medical specialists need to work closely with classroom teachers and parents. Because of problems with skill generalization, related services are best offered during the natural routine in the school and community rather than removing a student from class for isolated therapy.

According to NDCCD classroom arrangements must take into consideration students' needs for medications, special diets, or special equipment. Adaptive aids and equipment enable students to increase their range of functioning. For example, in recent years computers have become effective communication devices. Other aids include: wheelchairs, typewriters, headsticks (head gear), clamps, modified handles on cups and silverware, and communication boards. Computerized communication equipment and specially built vocational equipment also play important roles in adapting working environments for people with serious movement limitations.

Finally, NDCCD states that integration with non-disabled peers is another important component of the educational setting. Attending the same school and participating in the same activities as their non-disabled peers are crucial to the development of social skills and friendships for people with severe disabilities. Integration also benefits non-disabled peers and professionals through positive attitude change.

Section 1412 of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) states that students with disabilities must be educated with non-disabled peers "to the maximum extent appropriate." Further, the statute indicates that the removal of special education students from the regular education environment is appropriate "only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (IDEA, 2004). Schools are required to offer a "continuum of alternative placements" as the legislation recognizes that not all students will be able to be educated in the general education environment (IDEA, 2004).

The State of Missouri has addressed offering these alternative placements by providing the needed funding to local educational agencies (LEA) and by implementing a state school system. The State Schools for Severely Handicapped (SSSH) is a system of day school services in 36 separate school settings operated by the State Board of Education. They were established by state law, in 1957, to serve students with severe disabilities. If the evaluation information and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) compiled by the local district supports separate school placement as the student's least restrictive educational environment, the local educational agency may seek determination of student eligibility for SSSH services.

Study Overview

In January 2005, Governor Matt Blunt created by Executive Order the Missouri State Government Review Commission. Its twenty members hail from every region of the state, and possess a broad range of experience and expertise. Noting that a comprehensive review of state government functions had not occurred in more than 30 years, the Governor charged the Commission "…with the task of reviewing every Executive Department within our state government to identify opportunities to restructure, retool, reduce, consolidate or eliminate state government functions in accordance with what will result in the best and most cost effective service for Missouri citizens." More information on the Commission can be found at http://review.mo.gov/index.htm.

In November 2005, the Commission released the Report and Recommendations of the 2005 Missouri State Government Review Commission. As part of the report, the Commission made the following recommendation:

> **Recommendation #72:** The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education should examine best practices around the country for improving the delivery of services for severely handicapped children.
>
> **Justification:** Missouri is the only state that has a state administered day program for students with significant disabilities. Most other states serve these students through locally controlled regionalized services. Currently, approximately 60 local school districts in Missouri choose to serve nearly 300 students with severe disabilities while approximately 1,000 students with similar disabilities are served by the state operated State Schools for the Severely Handicapped. The State Schools for the Severely Handicapped used to serve over 3,000 students and have excess capacity. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education should examine best practices around the country to ensure that Missouri is providing services to its severely handicapped students in a manner that is most beneficial to the students and their families and which makes maximum use of the state's resources.
>
> **Implementation:** Department initiative

Acting on the Recommendation, the Governor asked DESE to examine national best practices to improve service delivery for students with severe disabilities. In order to fulfill the Governor's request, DESE commissioned a study. The objective of this study was to collect data that would allow its users to answer the following questions:

1. In what type of placements do students with mental retardation receive their educational services? Do states appear to be consistent in their approach to where these students are served?

2. What does the Missouri data tell us about placements for students with mental retardation? Is the Missouri data consistent with national data?

3. What does the Missouri data tell us about placements for students with severe disabilities?

4. Why do districts serve some students with severe disabilities and refer others to the State Schools for Severely Handicapped? Are there certain characteristics of students who are referred and those who are served by the district? Do any of the following play a role in the decision making process?

   - Parental preference
   - Teacher training
   - Location of the program

5. What service delivery models do other states use to serve the severe population? Are there trends that are seen in other states? Does district size influence how districts serve these students in other states? Do most states use special education cooperatives? Do these cooperatives operate separate schools? Do states have special funding for this population? Does the funding support certain models for service delivery?

6. Are there significant differences in the program costs for students with severe disabilities based upon the administrative structure (local district, coop or State School for the Severely Handicapped)? Are their factors in each of the models that influence cost per child?

7. Are there significant differences in the program curriculum or opportunity for integration based upon the administrative structure (local district, coop or State Schools for Severely Handicapped)?

8. Do the various stakeholder groups believe Missouri's current administrative structures and services for students with severe disabilities are beneficial for students and families? Are there differences in responses from parents served by local districts vs. served by State Schools for Severely Handicapped? Are there differences in responses from educators in districts that serve students with severe disabilities?

Study Methodology

The methodology used in this study was developed per the work plan outlined in the original request for proposal issued by the State of Missouri. This plan was developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to give a sampling of the targeted population by focusing on the school districts in the State that:

- send some students with severe disabilities to the State Schools for the Severely Handicapped (SSSH), but also serve some students with severe disabilities inside the local district or
- serve all students with severe disabilities inside the local district.

The study did not look at the population of students with severe disabilities in the State of Missouri in its entirety and therefore, is limited in scope to the data based on the above outlined DESE parameters. This methodology, executed by LAN Resources, allowed for both factual as well as perception data to be collected. This was accomplished through the following:

1. A Focus Group with SSSH principals.
2. Focus Groups in Blue Springs, St. Louis, and Springfield which included three groups in each location:
   i. SSSH teachers.
   ii. LEA Special Education Teachers, General Education Teachers, Principals, and Directors of Special Education.
   iii. Parents of students with severe disabilities who attend school in the LEA and parents of students with severe disabilities who attend a SSSH.
3. Focus Groups in Columbia, Missouri which included two groups:
   i. LEA Special Education Teachers, General Education Teachers, Principals, and Directors of Special Education.
   ii. Parents of students with severe disabilities who attend school in the LEA and parents of students with severe disabilities who attend a SSSH.
4. Interviews with Dr. Peter Kachris, Superintendent of the St. Louis County Special School District, and Dr. Clark Godshall, District Superintendent of the Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services of the State of New York.
5. Interviews with SSSH administrators
6. Mailing of surveys to the:
   i. State Directors of Special Education of the 49 states in the United States
   ii. SSSH educators and administrators.
   iii. LEA educators – general education teachers, special education teachers, principals, and superintendents
   iv. Parents of SSSH students with severe disabilities (see table below)
   v. Parents of LEA students with severe disabilities (see table below)

Parents from the following school districts were invited to participate in the study through surveys and focus groups.

Alton R-IV
Blue Springs R-IV
Boone CO. R-IV
Bolivar R-I
Buchanan CO R-IV
Cabool R-IV
Cape Girardeau 63
Clayton
Columbia 93
Fairview R-XI
Ferguson-Florissant R-II
Fox C-6
Francis Howell R-III
Ft Zumwalt R-II
Gainesville R-V
Grandview C-4
Grandview R-II
Green CO R-VIII
Hannibal 60
Hazelwood
Hickman Mills C-1
Howell Valley R-I

Jackson R-II
Jefferson CO R-VII
Jennings
Junction Hill C-12
Kansas City 33
Kirksville R-III
Ladue
Lamar R-I
Lebanon R-III
Lee's Summit R-VII
Liberty 53
Lindbergh R-VIII
Marion CO R-II
Mark Twain R-VIII
Mehlville R-III
Mountain Grove R-III
Normandy
North Kansas City 74
North Shelby
Parkway C-2
Pattonville R-III

Pemiscot CO Special School
District
Raymore-Peculiar R-II
Raytown C-2
Riverview Gardens
Rockwood R-VI
Savannah R-III
Scott County R-IV
Sikeston R-VI
Special School District of St. Louis
County
Springfield R-XII
St. Joseph
St. Louis City
Ste. Genevieve R-II
University City
Walnut Grove R-V
Wentzville R-IV
West Plains R-VII
Willow Springs R-IV
The State Schools for the Severely
Handicapped

The following tables reflect the participation in each area of the parameter based data collection.

Stakeholders	Population per RFP	Minus missing contact info	Potential Participants	Participants	Participation Percentage
State Directors	49	0	49	35	71.4%
SSSH Principals	12	0	12	7	58.3%
SSSH Teachers	47	0	47	44	93.6%
SSSH Parents	288	39	249	97	38.9%
LEA Parents	272	37	235	62	26.4%
LEA Teachers, Principals & Administrators	66	4	62	40	64.5%

Focus Group Participation

	Focus Group Participants
SSSH Principals and Administrators	15
SSSH Teachers	35
SSSH Parents	25
LEA Parents	11
LEA Teachers, Principals & Administrators	31

The remaining report displays the current state of educational placement, service delivery methods, costs, curriculum and integration for students with severe disabilities. It is organized into national and state data and responds to each listed research question with factual data as well as stakeholder perception.

It should be noted that throughout the study LAN Resources received a number of unsolicited comments, letters, and information from individuals throughout the state. Some were from known sources and others were received anonymously. These comments supported a variety of thoughts on the various issues of the study. Since they were unsolicited and not controlled for bias; they have not been incorporated into this report.

Section 1: National Data

Educational Placement of Mentally Retarded

The Question(s):

"In what type of placements do students with **mental retardation** receive their educational services?"

"Do states appear to be consistent in their approach to where these students are served?"

The Facts:

One objective of the study was to determine how other states throughout the nation provide educational services to students with severe disabilities. However, since this is a very low incidence population consistent reporting on a national level is difficult to obtain. Therefore, it was determined to expand the criteria for national placement data to include all students with mental retardation. This population would include students with severe disabilities, but would also include students with less severe and profound mental retardation.

Table 1.001 and Table 1.002 display educational placement data for all students with mental retardation served under IDEA Part B, ages 6 through 21, for the years 2003 and 2004. For comparison purposes, only states with similar total populations to the state of Missouri per the 2000 Census were reported.

This data was obtained from http://www.IDEAdata.org. The web site provides public access to the most recent data about children with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These data are collected annually by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs in accordance with Section 618 of IDEA. They are provided in the form of tables produced for the Annual Reports to Congress.

The tables show that in 2003 and 2004 Missouri and Maryland were the only states where less than 90% of the students with mental retardation were served at least in some part in a regular education setting (Regular classroom setting with non-disabled peers). In Missouri an average of 12% of the students with mental retardation were served in a Public Separate Day Facility (Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50% of the school day in public separate facilities). In Maryland an average of 11% of the students with mental retardation are served in a Public Separate Facility. The state of Minnesota, the next highest state to serve students outside of a regular education class setting, serves about six percent of their students with mental retardation through a Public Separate Facility. The remaining 13 states served, on average, 97% of their students with mental retardation within a regular education class setting.

However, on average, 48% of all students with mental retardation served through a regular education setting are outside of regular classes more than 60% of the time, while 32% are outside regular classes 21-60% of the time.

Table: 1.001: Students ages 6 through 21 with mental retardation, served under IDEA Part B

For Year 2003

State	Persons served with MR	% of Total Served	% of Total Population	By Placement														
				Outside Regular Education Class						Public Separate Facility		Private Separate Facility		Public Residential Facility		Private Residential Facility		Homebound / Hospital
				< 21% of the time		21-60% of the time		> 60% of the time										
Alabama	12,639	14.8%	1.3%	1,873	14.8%	7,398	58.5%	2,863	22.7%	368	2.9%	42	0.3%	5	0.0%	66	0.5%	24	0.2%
Colorado	3,546	4.9%	0.4%	1,323	37.3%	1,044	29.4%	1,091	30.8%	29	0.8%	19	0.5%	6	0.2%	17	0.5%	17	0.5%
Georgia	28,202	16.5%	1.4%	2,893	10.3%	7,685	27.2%	17,129	60.7%	172	0.6%	3	0.0%	255	0.9%	4	0.0%	61	0.2%
Indiana	22,025	14.4%	1.5%	3,460	15.7%	7,190	32.6%	10,821	49.1%	179	0.8%	10	0.0%	129	0.6%	124	0.6%	112	0.5%
Kentucky	17,816	21.3%	2.0%	4,679	26.3%	8,093	45.4%	4,786	26.9%	121	0.7%	1	0.0%	25	0.1%	21	0.1%	90	0.5%
Louisiana	11,048	12.2%	1.0%	1,329	12.0%	2,765	25.0%	6,455	58.4%	207	1.9%	38	0.3%	125	1.1%	0	0.0%	129	1.2%
Maryland	6,694	6.6%	0.5%	624	9.3%	1,456	21.8%	3,647	54.5%	774	11.6%	157	2.3%	0	0.0%	18	0.3%	18	0.3%
Massachusetts	12,466	8.6%	0.9%	1,458	11.7%	4,150	33.3%	6,136	49.2%	285	2.3%	297	2.4%	9	0.1%	123	1.0%	8	0.1%
Minnesota	9,548	9.4%	0.8%	1,214	12.7%	3,945	41.3%	3,692	38.7%	612	6.4%	9	0.1%	20	0.2%	20	0.2%	36	0.4%
Missouri	**12,060**	**9.4%**	**0.9%**	**881**	**7.3%**	**3,968**	**32.9%**	**5,507**	**45.7%**	**1,511**	**12.5%**	**109**	**0.9%**	**2**	**0.0%**	**8**	**0.1%**	**74**	**0.6%**
North Carolina	27,744	16.0%	1.5%	3,557	12.8%	8,379	30.2%	14,614	52.7%	833	3.0%	26	0.1%	38	0.1%	44	0.2%	187	0.7%
South Carolina	14,672	14.8%	1.6%	1,096	7.5%	2,729	18.6%	10,240	69.8%	304	2.1%	6	0.0%	36	0.2%	37	0.3%	224	1.5%
Tennessee	13,550	12.2%	1.1%	1,333	9.8%	4,967	36.7%	6,891	50.9%	167	1.2%	97	0.7%	2	0.0%	2	0.0%	91	0.7%
Virginia	13,897	8.9%	0.9%	481	3.5%	3,470	25.0%	9,469	68.1%	154	1.1%	101	0.7%	38	0.3%	73	0.5%	111	0.8%
Washington	5,734	5.2%	0.4%	378	6.6%	2,056	35.9%	3,261	56.9%	26	0.5%	8	0.1%	3	0.1%	0	0.0%	2	0.0%
Wisconsin	11,994	10.7%	1.0%	1,313	10.9%	4,211	35.1%	6,012	50.1%	374	3.1%	10	0.1%	29	0.2%	3	0.0%	42	0.4%

x = Data Suppressed.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), Data based on the December 1, 2003 count, updated as of July 31, 2004.

Table: 1.002: Students ages 6 through 21 with mental retardation, served under IDEA Part B

For Year 2004

State	Persons served with MR	% of Total Served	% of Total Population	By Placement														
				Outside Regular Education Class						Public Separate Facility		Private Separate Facility		Public Residential Facility		Private Residential Facility		Homebound/ Hospital	
				< 21% of the time		21-60% of the time		> 60% of the time											
Alabama	10,743	12.6%	1.1%	2,518	23.4%	5,376	50.0%	2,385	22.2%	312	2.9%	36	0.3%	12	0.1%	77	0.7%	27	0.3%
Colorado	3,540	4.9%	0.9%	1,327	37.5%	1,015	28.7%	1,100	31.1%	28	0.8%	28	0.8%	x	x	21	0.6%	x	x
Georgia	26,986	15.4%	1.2%	3,408	12.6%	7,143	26.5%	15,927	59.0%	168	0.6%	5	0.0%	238	0.9%	22	0.1%	75	0.3%
Indiana	21,732	13.9%	1.0%	3,698	17.0%	6,925	31.9%	10,557	48.6%	182	0.8%	7	0.0%	104	0.5%	129	0.6%	130	0.6%
Kentucky	17,851	20.7%	0.6%	5,455	30.6%	7,751	43.4%	4,357	24.4%	107	0.6%	x	x	34	0.2%	x	x	126	0.7%
Louisiana	10,704	11.8%	0.4%	1,464	13.7%	2,832	26.5%	5,987	55.9%	140	1.3%	x	x	111	1.0%	x	x	129	1.2%
Maryland	6,346	6.3%	0.8%	705	11.1%	1,292	20.4%	3,496	55.1%	661	10.4%	157	2.5%	x	x	x	x	20	0.3%
Massachusetts	12,368	8.4%	1.0%	1,691	13.7%	3,615	29.2%	6,338	51.2%	324	2.6%	258	2.1%	6	0.0%	130	1.1%	6	0.0%
Minnesota	9,539	9.3%	1.5%	1,137	11.9%	3,913	41.0%	3,702	38.8%	682	7.1%	17	0.2%	31	0.3%	18	0.2%	39	0.4%
Missouri	**11,871**	**9.3%**	**0.6%**	**828**	**7.0%**	**3,992**	**33.6%**	**5,337**	**45.0%**	**1,531**	**12.9%**	**127**	**1.1%**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**49**	**0.4%**
North Carolina	26,641	15.4%	0.5%	3,556	13.3%	7,646	28.7%	14,337	53.8%	784	2.9%	33	0.1%	46	0.2%	54	0.2%	185	0.7%
South Carolina	13,770	13.8%	0.6%	1,093	7.9%	2,382	17.3%	9,728	70.6%	291	2.1%	16	0.1%	20	0.1%	30	0.2%	210	1.5%
Tennessee	13,089	11.8%	0.3%	1,408	10.8%	4,506	34.4%	6,664	50.9%	249	1.9%	113	0.9%	82	0.6%	x	x	x	x
Virginia	13,117	8.3%	0.8%	2,035	15.5%	3,883	29.6%	6,662	50.8%	190	1.4%	115	0.9%	24	0.2%	91	0.7%	117	0.9%
Washington	5,570	5.0%	0.4%	363	6.5%	1,872	33.6%	3,291	59.1%	30	0.5%	8	0.1%	x	x	x	x	x	x
Wisconsin	11,619	10.3%	1.3%	1,049	9.0%	4,827	41.5%	5,329	45.9%	329	2.8%	x	x	34	0.3%	x	x	40	0.3%

x = Data Suppressed.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), "Part B, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act implementation of FAPE requirements," 2004. Data updated as of July 30, 2005.

The data collected and reported on the national level was for all students with mental retardation. However, the objective of this study was to determine how educational services were being provided to students with severe disabilities, a much lower incidence population. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed and sent to the State Directors of Special Education of the other forty-nine (49) states. The questionnaire was designed to identify which educational entities throughout the states were responsible for providing educational services to students with severe disabilities as well as determine the frequency of use for various service delivery methods.

The questionnaires were distributed to all 49 states through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and returned to LAN Resources for processing. In total, 35 of the 49 State Directors participated, for a total participation rate of 71%. It should be noted that the State Directors of Special Education for the states of Kansas and Ohio were new to the position and did not feel they had enough knowledge to participate.

Educational Placement of Students with Severe Disabilities

The State Directors were asked how students with severe disabilities were delivered educational services. Throughout the country, the most frequently used method of educational service delivery for students with severe disabilities were self contained classrooms operated by local school districts. Twenty-one, or 62%, of the responding state directors stated this delivery method was either always or often used, while the remaining 13, or 38%, stated it was used sometimes or rarely. The second most frequently used delivery method was regular classrooms with supports.

Table 1.003: Mean and Percent of Use of Delivery Methods of Educational Services 35 Participating States

	Mean*	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Separate Day Schools operated by local school districts	2.48	0.0%	10.3%	37.9%	41.4%	10.3%
Separate Day Schools operated by Cooperatives serving local school districts	2.50	0.0%	17.9%	39.3%	17.9%	25.0%
Self-contained classrooms operated by local school districts	3.65	5.9%	55.9%	35.3%	2.9%	0.0%
Self-contained classrooms operated by cooperatives	2.65	0.0%	23.1%	46.2%	3.8%	26.9%
Regular classrooms with supports	3.26	3.2%	35.5%	45.2%	16.1%	0.0%

*Mean is calculated on a five point scale were 5.0 would equal "Always" and 1.0 would equal "Never."

Administrative Structure of Educational Services to Students with Severe Disabilities

Most of the states, 78%, have multiple entities responsible for administering educational services to students with severe disabilities. These states serve students through single school district operations, multi-district cooperatives (Coops), and/or through a state agency such as the Department of Education, Schools for the Deaf and Blind, or a Department of Disabilities and Special Needs. Seven of the 35 states stated only one entity was responsible for administering these educational services. Hawaii and Kentucky stated a state agency was responsible, while Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Montana stated single school districts were the only entity responsible. Table 1.003 displays the entities responsible for administering educational services to students with severe disabilities in all 35 responding states.

Table 1.004: Entities Responsible for Administering Educational Services to Students with Severe Disabilities

STATE	Regional cooperatives	Multi-school district cooperatives	Single school district operation	State Agency
Alabama			X	
Alaska			X	
Arizona	X		X	
Colorado		X	X	X
Connecticut			X	
Delaware		X	X	
Florida			X	
Georgia			X	X
Hawaii				X
Idaho		X	X	
Illinois		X	X	
Indiana	X			
Iowa	X	X	X	
Kentucky				X
Maryland	X		X	X
Massachusetts			X	
Michigan	X	X	X	
Minnesota		X	X	
Missouri		X	X	X
Montana			X	
Nebraska	X		X	X
New Hampshire	X	X	X	X
New Mexico	X	X	X	X
New York	X	X	X	X
North Dakota		X	X	
Oklahoma		X	X	
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	
South Carolina		X	X	X
South Dakota		X	X	
Tennessee			X	
Texas		X	X	
Vermont		X	X	
Virginia		X	X	
Washington	X	X	X	
Wisconsin	X	X	X	X
Wyoming	X		X	X

Best Practices

Throughout the data collection process for this study, participants were asked to list any "Best Practices" they have implemented or experienced when providing educational services to students with severe disabilities. A copy of all comments received can be found in Attachment 1 at the end of this report.

Throughout the nation, the State Directors of Special Education stated that placing students with severe disabilities in a local district setting, with access to regular educational classrooms, while participating in some general education curriculum as best practices. They stated that although many of these students were typically in self-contained classrooms, they should have access to the regular educational classroom and not be served via separate facilities. Their approaches were to integrate students with severe disabilities into the regular classroom, with supports, as often as possible. It was not their goal to place these students in separate facilities.

From personal interviews with Dr. Peter Kachris, Superintendent of the St. Louis County Special School District, and Dr. Clark Godshall, District Superintendent of the Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services of the State of New York, the following best practices were identified.

- It is important for the state to look at service delivery from a state level.
- There has to be efficiencies, financial efficiencies, staffing efficiencies and continuing to service efficiencies and then all of those have to be encircled with accountability before the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) will be effective.
- The BOCES didn't just pop up, it evolved over time.
- The BOCES works because it gives an incentive back to the districts for using its services.
- The BOCES were initially created to assist small districts that could not provide services to students with severe disabilities effectively or efficiently. New York had 10,000 school districts so there were many that fit into that classification.
- So the BOCES hired the staff needed, sent them into the district, and then billed them out to the local district. The district then received 80 cents on the dollar they spent back, the next year in state funding. There must be incentives to the district to use the BOCES or it just doesn't work, and this incentive must come from the state.
- Reliance on local funding forces BOCES to be entrepreneurial in order to stay in business.
- Even with a BOCES there are options given to the parent and the IEP team for service delivery.
- Maintaining local control of the educational process is an important criterion in strengthening the BOCES system.
- The BOCES local governance structure results in a more customer-driven system. It provides more flexibility to meet changing priorities than does a more centralized system.

Section 2: Missouri Data

The objectives of the study required LAN Resources, LLC to collect and assess state level information from both a factual and stakeholder perception basis in the following areas:

- Educational Placement
- Dual Service Delivery
- Financial Costs of Providing Educational Services in Missouri
- Curriculum for Students with Severe Disabilities
- Opportunities for Integration for Students with Severe Disabilities

Educational Placement

The Question(s):

"What does the Missouri data tell us about placements for students with **mental retardation**? Is the Missouri data consistent with national data?"

"What does the Missouri data tell us about placements for students with **severe disabilities**?"

The Facts:

Like the majority of the other states throughout the country, students with severe disabilities in Missouri receive educational services through several different entities. Throughout the state of Missouri LEAs, multi-school co-operatives, special school districts, and the SSSH all take part in serving the educational needs of students with severe disabilities.

Table 2.001 displays the breakdown of educational placement for all students with mental retardation. These figures were for the entire population of students with mental retardation, and include students with severe disabilities. Data for all students with mental retardation was included because the state does not collect data on students with severe disabilities as a group.

Table 2.001 displays that in the academic years of 2004 and 2005, 85% of all Missouri students with mental retardation were being served at a LEA, with the majority being outside of a regular education classroom more than 60% of the day. Of the approximately 12,000 total students with mental retardation, the majority of the remaining 15% were served through the SSSH or at a Public Separate Day Facility.

Table 2.001: Missouri DESE Division of Special Education
Placement of Students with Mental Retardation
Ages: 5k-21

Placement	December 1, 2004		December 1, 2005	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Outside Regular Class less than 21percent of day	848	7.0%	838	6.9%
Outside Regular Class at least 21 percent / No more than 60 percent	4,038	33.5%	4,284	35.1%
Outside Regular Class more than 60 percent of day	5,404	44.9%	5,255	43.1%
Public Separate (Day) Facility	562	4.7%	580	4.8%
Private Separate (Day) Facility	129	1.1%	121	1.0%
Public Residential Facility	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Private Residential Facility	7	0.1%	1	0.0%
Homebound / Hospital	50	0.4%	72	0.6%
State Operated Separate School (SSSH)	1,002	8.3%	1,041	8.5%
Total	12,040	100.0%	12,192	100.0%

Notes:
Data is taken from Core Data screen 11-Special Education Placement Counts by Age as of 7/26/2006
Totals include all students ages 5k-21 with a MR disability
The December 1 Child Count is an unduplicated count of students. Students are reported by their primary disability only

To report the educational placement for the lower incidence population of students with severe disabilities, LAN Resources attempted to collect placement data from 30 different agencies throughout the state that were identified as serving students with severe disabilities. These agencies consisted of LEAs, multi-school district co-operatives, special school districts and the SSSH. The full list of agencies can be found in Table 2.003. According to the data collected, 1,851 students with severe disabilities were served in the state of Missouri during the 2005-06 school years, or 15% of all students with mental retardation.

Using the definition of a student with severe disabilities, stated earlier in the report, each agency was asked to disclose how many students with severe disabilities they served during the 2005-2006 academic year and also state each student's educational placement. The responses for each agency can be found in Table 2.003.

Table 2.002 summarizes the data displayed in Table 2.003 by the type of agency; LEA, special school district, and the SSSH (which for this report was reported as one entity).

Unlike the total population of students with mental retardation, the majority of students with severe disabilities are served in Public Separate Facilities. Of those that are served by a LEA, 75% are outside of a regular classroom more than 60% of the time.

Table 2.002: Disclosed Educational Placement of Students with Severe Disabilities by Agency Type.

	LEA		Special School Districts		SSSH		Total	
Students Served with Severe Disabilities	283		475		1,093		1,851	
Outside Regular Class								
< 21% of the time	1	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
21-60% of the time	12	4.2%	27	5.7%	0	0.0%	39	2.1%
> 60% of the time	211	74.6%	132	27.8%	0	0.0%	343	18.5%
Public Separate Facility	43	15.2%	309	65.1%	1,093	100.0%	1,445	78.1%
Private Separate Facility	7	2.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	0.4%
Public Residential Facility	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Private Residential Facility	0	0.0%	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%
Homebound/Hospital	9	3.2%	5	1.1%	0	0.0%	14	0.8%

Source: Table contains data reported by individual LEAs for purpose of this study. Data was reported to LAN Resources, LLC.

Table 2.003: Students identified with Severe Disabilities that are educated in Missouri public school Districts by their educational placement

School District	Students served	Outside Regular Class			Public Separate Facility		Private Separate Facility		Public Residential Facility		Private Residential Facility		Homebound/ Hospital	
		< 21%	21-60%	> 60%										
Blue Springs	21			20 95.2%									1	4.8%
Bolivar	26				23	88.5%	3	11.5%						
Cameron RI	5			5 100.0										
Columbia	26			19 73.0%	6	23.0%							1	4.0%
Dallas County RI	14		3 21.4%	11 78.60%										
Dunklin RV	10			5 50.0%	5	50.0%								
Fox C6	6			5 83.3%									1	16.7%
Francis Howell	32		1 3.1%	29 90.6%									2	6.3%
Ft. Zumwalt	8			7 87.5%			1	12.5%						
Holden RIII	4			1 25.0%			3	75.0%						
Hollister RV	3		1 33.3%	2 66.7%										
Kirksville	6		1 16.7%	5 83.3%										
Lamar RI	6		4 66.7%	2 33.3%										
Lebanon RIII	7			7 100.0%										
Lincoln County RIII	6			6 100.0%										
Northwest RI	3			3 100.0%										
Park Hill	3			3 100.0%										
Raytown CII	4				4	100.0%								
Rogersville	5			5 100.0%										
Rolla 31	4			4 100.0%										
Savannah	4			4 100.0%										
Seneca RVII	5		2 4	3 60.0%										
Springfield RXII	44			40 90.9%									4	9.1%
Ste. Genevieve RII	6			6 100.0%										
Union RXI	7			7 100.0%										
Wentzville RIV	9	1 11.1%		7 77.8%	5	55.6%								
WindsorC1	5			5 100.0%										
Pemiscot County Special School District	21			2 9.5%	19	90.5%								
St. Louis County Special School District	454		27 5.9%	130 28.6%	290	63.9%					2	0.4%	5	1.1%
State Schools for Severely Handicapped	1,093				1,093	100.0%								

Source: Table contains data reported by individual LEAs for purpose of this study. Data was reported to LAN Resources, LLC.

Stakeholder Perception on Educational Placement:

As part of the study, several stakeholder groups were sent written surveys via the US Mail to gauge the opinions on various topics concerning the educational services provided to students with severe disabilities. Included in these groups were parents of students with severe disabilities, served by the SSSH as well as by a LEA, and educators and administrators from LEAs, special school districts and the SSSH.

When asked if the regular education classroom should be the first option proposed by the school district as a placement for a student with severe disabilities, 73% of parents and 58% of the educators from the SSSH disagreed. Forty-six percent of the parents with a child with severe disabilities served by a LEA disagreed.

Table 2.004: The regular education classroom should be the first option proposed by the school district as a placement for a student with severe disabilities.

	Mean	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
SSSH				
Parents	2.08	19.5%	7.6%	72.8%
Educators	2.66	38.0%	4.0%	58.0%
LEA				
Parents	2.73	29.3%	24.4%	46.4%
Educators	2.92	41.0%	7.7%	51.3%
Others				
SSD Parents	2.17	25.0%	8.3%	66.7%
CO-OP Parents	2.00	11.1%	22.2%	66.6%

Along with collecting data from educational agencies that served students with severe disabilities, a series of focus groups were held throughout the state to collect qualitative, perception data. Educational placement data was addressed in these groups by asking the parents if they felt they were given a choice when deciding where their child would receive educational services.

Throughout the state, most of the parents felt they were given a choice as to where their child could receive educational services. However, they shared several instances where information about options, such as the state school, was not given. Other parents shared that their child had to go outside of the local district because the school building was not handicapped accessible or otherwise prepared to service their child. The parents that stated they were given a choice selected the child's placement based on the staff at the facility and the available resources.

The following are two examples of comments received from the focus groups about how the choice of placement made a difference:

> "We tried mainstreaming our daughter in kindergarten and first grade and it just didn't work. She pretty much just shut down. So we transferred her to the state school and within a couple of weeks she lit up like a Christmas tree. She went from being the least able child to the queen."

> "We had very much representation in the decision. She had attended the coop within our district but her condition was making that difficult. We considered our options with the IEP team, toured a couple of state schools and determined what we all thought was in her best interest. We chose the one we did because she is non-ambulatory and medically fragile."

Dual Service Delivery

The Question(s):

"Why do districts serve some students with **severe disabilities** and refer others to the State Schools for Severely Handicapped?"

"Are there certain characteristics of students who are referred and those who are served by the district?"

"Do any of the following play a role in the decision making process; Parental preference, Teacher training, Location of the program?"

The Facts:

Although the State of Missouri has a state school system, several LEAs throughout the state are able to serve some of the students with severe disabilities within their local district, and refer some of their students with severe disabilities to the SSSH. Table 2.005 displays the LEAs that meet these criteria.

Table 2.005: Number and Percent of Students identified with Severe Disabilities that are served by public school districts and/or by the State Schools for the Severely Handicapped

School District	Students with Severe Disabilities	Served Inside the District		Served by the State Schools for the Severely Handicapped	
Blue Springs	29	21	72.4%	8	27.6%
Cameron RI	8	5	62.5%	3	37.5%
Columbia	40	26	65.0%	14	35.0%
Dunklin RV	8	3	37.5%	5	62.5%
Fox C6	10	6	60.0%	4	40.0%
Francis Howell	34	32	94.1%	2	5.9%
Ft. Zumwalt	11	8	72.7%	3	27.3%
Hollister RV	4	3	75.0%	1	25.0%
Northwest RI	6	3	50.0%	3	50.0%
Park Hill	5	3	60.0%	2	40.0%
Raytown CII	5	4	80.0%	1	20.0%
Rogersville	8	5	62.5%	3	37.5%
Rolla 31	20	4	20.0%	16	80.0%
Savannah	7	4	57.1%	3	42.9%
Seneca RVII	6	5	83.3%	1	16.7%
Springfield RXII	57	44	77.2%	13	22.8%
Union RXI	11	5	45.5%	6	54.5%
Wentzville RIV	12	9	75.0%	3	25.0%
Windsor C1	12	5	41.7%	7	58.3%

To help understand why these LEAs serve some students with severe disabilities and refer other students to the SSSH, LAN Resources contacted each district to gather information. Each LEA was asked "Why does your district offer a dual service delivery system for students with severe disabilities? In other words why do some of these students receive their education within the district while others are educated by the State School for the Severely Handicapped?" The responses received are listed below.

- Based upon individual student needs and services, the district has considered various placements on the continuum for students with severe disabilities such as "Outside Regular Class more than 60% of the day", "State Operated Separate School", "Private Separate Day Facility", and "Public Separate Day Facility." Some of our students were placed at the SSSH because at the time of placement their unique needs could not be met within the existing district programs. For younger students the district chose to try the Least Restrictive Environment programs located within elementary buildings where the students would have more contact with regular education peers. As some of the students grow older these students require a more specialized staff and curriculum to meet their special education needs. Some of the student's at SSSH have transferred into the district with current placement at SSSH and were being successful, so the district accepted the placement so the student's educational process would not be interrupted.

- The decision is based on the functional level and individual needs of the students.

- All decisions are based on programming needs to individual students per their IEPs. Students who are referred to SSSH require smaller group instruction in a smaller setting with fewer distractions. The issue of safety is additionally a priority for many of our students.

- Students served in the district are served with greater than 60% services in special education. Students served in the SSSH require a Public Separate Day Facility program as determined by the student IEP. State Schools operates a Public Day School Facility which according to the IEP is the least restrictive environment.

- The students who are served at SSSH either transferred into the district from another State School or are approaching 21 years of age and have been served at SSSH since kindergarten, or they are medically fragile. Students who are initially identified in ECSE or who transfer into the district from another public system are usually served in self-contained classrooms within the district.

- We value the more inclusive setting that the student's neighborhood school can provide.

- The application process to SSSH is very long and the State School Administration (at the state level) makes unilateral decisions not to place students, even after the IEP team has a consensus decision to place a student in the State School.

- IEP team decisions are based on the individual needs of the child. Different IEP teams, of which the parents are key members, arrived at different decisions regarding the child's needs and placement.

- The district looks at each student individually to determine what placement offers FAPE in the least restrictive environment. Some of the students are so severe that the teams have felt like the student's educational needs are best met in another setting.

- All of these students were at one time referred to the SSSH. The ones we are serving were rejected as not qualifying at that time.

- All decisions are based on the IEP team decisions. Parent input on that IEP team decisions is highly regarded. However, when parents do not want their child placed in the State School system, the district historically will not place their child there.

- The ability to integrate, the parents' strong belief in inclusion is a reason why we serve some students. The very young students want to provide an all integrated environment with non-disabled peers as possible before making a separate setting recommendation.

- Some student's disability is so severe that they require a more restrictive setting (SSSH) to meet their individual needs. It could financially impact our district if we provided the level of services (i.e. individual nurse, etc.) that the SSSH provides.

- Our district chooses to serve some of our students with severe disabilities if they are continuing to make progress towards their IEP goals. We also choose to do this if we feel we can provide an appropriate curriculum for them as we feel this provides the Least Restrictive Environment for them.

- Student placement is a team decision based on evaluation data, goals and objectives, long-term goals and the amount, type and diversity of the related service therapies required for the students. Individual needs of the students determine programming.

- Placement decisions are made by the IEP team based on evaluation data, long term goals, and the need for intensive therapies.

- The IEP team determined the Least Restrictive Environment to be the State School for the Severely Handicapped for one of our students. For the other five students the IEP teams determined the Least Restrictive Environment to be within the district.

- Least Restrictive Environment! Parent requests.

- The district serves students in the local setting first and when/if they make no progress, we refer them. Also if progress is only seen in a specific therapy area, but not others. If programs are mostly therapy programs and specialized equipment is needed that is more accessible and usable at the State School, we refer.

- We first try to serve all students in our district. When we have exhausted all possible interventions and see that the student is not making progress in their goals and objectives, then we refer to the State Schools. State Schools offers community access throughout the day that is not typically offered in the public school. The State School has more flexibility with their curriculum than the public schools also. We are expected to have one curriculum which is the adopted district curriculum. Modifications are made to that curriculum, but all students are expected to have the same curriculum.

- The students served at the SSSH are much lower functioning and some require help in all their daily living skills (toileting, feeding, etc.). Many parents of these students prefer their child go to State Schools so they are not around non-disabled peers to make fun of them or to be stared at.

Stakeholder Perception on Dual Service Delivery:

During the focus group process many of the administrators stated that the districts' first choice was to serve students with severe disabilities within the district, and if at the point where progress begins to diminish, they seek other alternatives for the students. It was stressed however, by administrators and educators, that the choice of the parents weighed heavily on placement.

Table 2.006 displays results on the stakeholders' opinion as to whether a public school is accountable for providing an education to all children, regardless of the severity of their needs. The table is broken down by the different stakeholder groups and by agency type.

Table 2.006: A public school district is accountable for providing an education to all children, regardless of the severity of their needs.

	Mean*	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
SSSH				
Parents	3.78	68.8%	5.4%	25.8%
Educators	3.84	70.0%	14.0%	16.0%
LEA				
Parents	4.71	92.7%	4.9%	2.4%
Educators	4.30	87.5%	2.5%	10.0%
Others				
SSD Parents	4.08	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%
Coop Parents	4.80	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

* Measured using Mean score. Means are based on a 5 point scale where 5.00 = Strongly Agree and 1.00 = Strongly Disagree.

The results show that there is a significant difference in opinion based on stakeholder type. Both educators of the SSSH and parents of students that attend a SSSH were less inclined to agree with the statement. Only about two-thirds of this group agreed with the statement, while approximately 90% of the educators and parents of the LEA agreed with the statement.

Financial Costs of Providing Educational Services in Missouri

The Question(s):

"Are there significant differences in the program costs for students with **severe disabilities** based upon the administrative structure (local district, coop or State School for the Severely Handicapped) and are their factors in each of the models that influence cost per child?"

The Facts:

To report the costs associated with providing educational services to students with severe disabilities throughout the state, LAN Resources attempted to collect placement data from 30 different agencies throughout the state that reported serving students with severe disabilities. According to the data collected by LAN Resources, LLC, nearly $56 million dollars were spent providing educational services to the reported 1,826 students with severe disabilities in the State of Missouri, during the 2005-06 academic year. This averages out to about $30,500 per student.

Of the 30 agencies, LAN Resources received data and input from a total of 27 agencies for a participation rate of 87%. Each agency was asked to disclose the total costs for providing educational services to students with severe disabilities during the 2005-2006 academic year and to breakdown those costs by type. The responses for each agency can be found in Table 2.008. It should be noted that no cost data was received from, Hollister RV, Lebanon RIII, and Northwest RI school districts; therefore the data that was submitted to DESE for that academic year, for reimbursement, was used in the table where applicable.

Table 2.007 summarizes the data displayed in Table 2.008 by the type of agency; LEA, special school district, and the SSSH.

Table 2.007: Disclosed Costs by Agency Type.

	LEA	Special School District	SSSH	Total
Students Served	**258**	**475**	**1,093**	**1,826**
Average Cost per Student	$ 24,532	$ 33,700	$ 30,667	$ 30,590
Total Costs	$ 6,329,352	$ 16,007,562	$ 33,519,550	$ 55,856,464
Instructional Costs	$ 3,904,010	$ 8,866,806	$ 13,787,543	$ 26,558,359
Related Services	$ 910,313	$ 1,770,636	$ 4,803,240	$ 7,484,189
Assistive Technology	$ 11,203	$ 10,000	$ 8,900	$ 30,103
Transportation	$ 885,630	$ 3,189,840	$ 8,295,631	$ 12,371,100
Tuition/Facility Cost	$ 222,828	$ 1,610,492	$ 3,188,054	$ 5,021,374
Other Costs	$ 145,938	$ 559,788	$ 3,436,182	$ 4,141,907

Source: Table contains data reported by individual LEAs for purpose of this study. Data was reported to LAN Resources, LLC.

Notes: No individual cost data was received from, Hollister RV, Lebanon RIII, and Northwest RI school districts so none of their data is included in this table. The data they reported to DESE is included in Table 2.006

TABLE 2.008: Costs for Providing Educational Services to Students with Severe Disabilities

School District	No. Pupils*	Average Cost per Student	Total Costs**	Instructional Costs	Related Services	Assistive Technology	Transportation	Tuition/Facility Cost	Other Costs
Blue Springs	21	$44,080	$925,684	$498,508	$262,954	$0	$134,347	$20,159	$9,716
Bolivar	26	$12,943	$336,508	$189,418	$33,555	$0	$20,141	$55,763	$37,581
Cameron RI	5	$21,544	$107,722	$103,501	$2,824	$0	$0	$0	$1,397
Columbia	26	$27,615	$717,986	$419,162	$106,565	$0	$189,460	$0	$2,799
Dallas County RI	4	$20,080	$80,322	$64,000	$8,161	$0	$8,161	$0	$0
Dunklin RV	3	$29,031	$87,092	$30,000	$10,000	$6,872	$40,220	$0	$0
Fox C6	6	$25,246	$151,477	$98,650	$5,799	$0	$15,848	$0	$31,180
Francis Howell	32	$28,724	$919,180	$604,044	$52,754	$356	$202,315	$46,000	$13,711
Ft. Zumwalt	8	$28,723	$229,781	$149,196	$31,914	$541	$2,130	$46,000	$0
Holden RIII	4	$12,882	$51,530	$1,332	$0	$0	$4,879	$44,894	$425
Hollister RV	3	$12,253	$36,760						
Kirksville	6	$21,016	$126,094	$74,429	$26,606	$0	$6,239	$0	$18,819
Lamar RI	6	$18,115	$108,689	$104,689	$0	$0	$2,000	$0	$2,000
Lebanon RIII	7	$14,464	$101,247						
Lincoln County RIII	4	$34,539	$138,157	$87,324	$13,726	$0	$37,106	$0	$0
Logan Rogersville	5	$16,080	$80,400	$57,000	$14,000	$0	$9,400	$0	$0
Northwest RI	3	$37,125	$111,374						
Park Hill	3	$35,788	$107,363	$63,137	$18,410	$1,059	$23,115	$0	$1,642
Raytown CII	4	$27,590	$110,360	$55,056	$22,854	$1,750	$30,700	$0	$0
Rolla 31	4	$15,304	$61,216	$42,023	$4,000	$0	$15,193	$0	$0
Savannah	4	$14,205	$56,819	$49,599	$6,133	$0	$1,086	$0	$0
Seneca RVII	5	$21,454	$107,269	$78,817	$12,600	$325	$15,527	$0	$0
Springfield RXII	44	$20,165	$887,256	$665,241	$157,677	$0	$64,338	$0	$0
Ste. Genevieve RII	6	$33,112	$198,671	$124,470	$58,789	$300	$0	$10,012	$5,100
Union RXI	5	$23,661	$118,306	$92,416	$6,762	$0	$18,838	$0	$290
Wentzville RIV	9	$27,877	$250,891	$190,582	$31,337	$0	$24,106	$0	$4,866
Windsor C1	5	$24,240	$121,199	$61,415	$22,893	$0	$20,480	$0	$16,411
Pemiscot County SSD	21	$16,667	$350,000	$300,000	$10,000	$10,000	$30,000	$0	$0
St. Louis County SSD	454	$34,488	$15,657,562	$8,566,806	$1,760,636	$0	$3,159,840	$1,610,492	$559,788
State Schools for SH	1093	$30,667	$33,519,550	$13,787,543	$4,803,240	$8,900	$8,295,631	$3,188,054	$3,436,182

* For all local school districts, Number of pupils is the number that was reported to DESE and approved for reimbursement for the 2004-05 academic year. Data for Pemiscot County and St. Louis County is data that was reported by those agencies during the study period.

** Total costs were calculated on data provided by each agency, except for Holden RIII, Hollister RV, Lebanon RIII, and Northwest RI which did not report any cost data. Their total cost data was data reported to DESE for reimbursement for the 2005-06 academic year.

Stakeholder Input on Financial Costs:

Table 2.009 displays results of the stakeholders' opinion as to whether the current practices for providing services to students with severe disabilities in Missouri makes maximum use of the state's resources.

Table 2.009: The current practices for providing services to students with severe disabilities in Missouri makes maximum use of the state's resources.

		Mean	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
SSSH					
	Parents	3.38	51.7%	20.9%	27.5%
	Educators	3.92	68.0%	16.0%	16.0%
LEA					
	Parents	2.78	24.4%	39.1%	36.6%
	Educators	3.23	41.0%	23.1%	35.9%
Others					
	SSD Parents	3.58	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%
	Coop Parents	3.44	66.7%	11.1%	22.2%

* Measured using Mean score. Means are based on a 5 point scale where 5.00 = Strongly Agree and 1.00 = Strongly Disagree.

The results show that there is a significant difference in opinion based on stakeholder type. Educators of the SSSH and parents of students that were served by the special school district and co-ops were more inclined to agree with the statement. Sixty-eight percent of the SSSH educators agreed there was maximum use of state resources, while 16% disagreed. Two thirds or more of the special school district and co-op parents agreed with the statement.

Twenty-four percent of the parents with a student with severe disabilities that attended a LEA agreed with the statement, while 37% disagreed. Local district educators were split in the agreement, with 41% agreeing, 36% disagreeing and 23% being neutral or undecided.

Information collected throughout the focus groups process did not yield much conversation on the total costs associated with providing educational services to students with severe disabilities. They just didn't have information that would allow them an opinion.

However, there were numerous comments given by SSSH educators that salaries for teachers and educators, employed throughout the state school system, were typically $5,000 to $10,000 per year less than public school teachers. There was also concern, from those employees, about the purchasing processes used when buying supplies and equipment. They felt they could use available funds more efficiently by not using the pre-selected state approved vendors. And finally, the SSSH employees were concerned about the lack of computer technology, as well as Internet access, inside their school buildings. They believed this would be a valuable resource for their teaching and their students.

Parent focus groups expressed some concern about adaptive equipment availability and the physical state of many the SSSH buildings.

Curriculum for Students with Severe Disabilities

The Question(s):

"Are there significant differences in the program curriculum based upon the administrative structure (local district, coop or State Schools for Severely Handicapped)?"

The Facts:

Curriculum for students with severe disabilities is typically customized to meet the individual needs of each student. Therefore, the question arises of how students with severe disabilities are taught and is there consistency, throughout the state, in the curriculum approach used. Thirty educational agencies throughout the state, that serve students with severe disabilities, were asked a series of questions about the curriculum provided to students with severe disabilities. Table 2.010 displays the percent of agencies by type that answered **"yes"** to the questions.

Table 2.010: Focus of Curriculum for Students with Severe Disabilities by Agency Type

	Local School Districts	Special School Districts	State School for Severely Handicapped	Total
Has the curriculum used been developed specifically for students with severe disabilities?	74.1%	0.0%	100.0%	69.0%
Curriculum Focus				
Is community based instruction part of the curriculum?	84.6%	100.0%	100.0%	85.7%
Does the curriculum focus on essential life skills including?				
Daily Living	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Behavior Social Skills Development	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Self-Help Skills	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Motor Development	96.3%	100.0%	100.0%	96.6%
Supported Vocational Skills	92.6%	100.0%	100.0%	93.1%
Leisure Recreational Skills	92.6%	100.0%	100.0%	93.1%
Augmented Communication	92.3%	100.0%	100.0%	93.1%
Does the curriculum include?				
Mathematics	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Communication Arts	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Fine Arts	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Health and PE	96.3%	100.0%	100.0%	96.6%
Social Studies	88.9%	100.0%	100.0%	89.7%
Science	88.5%	100.0%	100.0%	89.3%
Curriculum Performance Benchmarks				
Is curriculum aligned to the skills or Alternate Performance Indicators used for the MAP-A?	96.0%	100.0%	100.0%	96.3%
Is the curriculum aligned to the Show Me Standards?	88.0%	100.0%	100.0%	88.9%
Does the curriculum include the Alternate Grade Level Expectations?	92.6%	100.0%	100.0%	93.1%
Do teachers use the Alternate Grade Level Expectations in their instruction?	92.3%	100.0%	100.0%	92.9%

Stakeholder Perception on Curriculum:

Along with collecting data from educational agencies that served students with severe disabilities, a series of focus groups were held throughout the state to collect qualitative data on several areas, one being curriculum. Throughout the state there seems to be a common philosophy that the curriculum used in teaching students with severe disabilities is not a "one size fits all" approach and that a unique, individualized curriculum must be designed for each student. Also stated throughout the state was the fact that these individualized curriculums typically do not focus on the typical core academics such as mathematics, science, social studies, etc., but instead is a more functional curriculum focused on life skills. Another important component of these curriculums is community based learning.

The following examples of a functional curriculum and its benefit to the family were provided by several parents during the focus groups:

> "I'm an example of a going to the movies person. Our son is very social and when he was younger he did have difficulty with waiting, hearing loud noises, and screaming. In our program the kids go out in the community almost everyday; whether it's shopping or the library or bowling and my son has made remarkable progress. Mainly in that we can go to the movies all the time, now that's the two hours he doesn't talk. But that has made a huge difference in our family. When my older son wanted to go to the movie my husband would either have to go or I would take him, but now we can go as a family. And that's with anything like going out to eat. They have worked very hard with him. His social behavior has improved immensely."

> "My son also uses an augmentative communication device which they take with him. When they go shopping to the mall certain stores have become very "Mike-friendly." The staff at American Eagle is fantastic with him. They will pick out the shirts then he will use he device to tell them what color he prefers. We give him gift cards for his birthday so he uses them as cash or credit card in that respect. Another thing they [the teachers and staff] work on with him, my son is very conscience of whether he is in aisle 8 or 9 or 10; that's how they work on numbers with him and he knows what checkout lanes to go to and he will tell them he would rather go to 3 than 2. So they are using a very functional community based educational curriculum."

> "She is a big vending machine user and they've taught her to do that so we have been working up to her 21st birthday and going to the boat for her birthday. So they really have tweaked the curriculum to the individual students needs and what is realistic for them. She is very disabled and as far as what her future is going to be is probably just social time when you get down to it. If she can socialize her life is great. I don't think we can expect more for her and that's OK. But on the other hand we are fighting for that socialization because when she can't socialize, out in the community in some fashion, her health deteriorates. We had a perfect example when she had her back surgery and rods put in. She was out of school 6 months and towards the end of that she became depressed and her health declined greatly.

Opportunity for Integration for Students with Severe Disabilities

The Question(s):

"Are there significant differences in the opportunity for integration based upon the administrative structure (local district, coop or State Schools for Severely Handicapped)?"

The Facts:

Another component of the curriculum designed for students with severe disabilities, is the amount of time each student spends in a regular classroom setting with non-disabled peers, referred to as integration or inclusion. The amount of integration is different for each student based on their situation and is part of the student's IEP. Throughout the state, there are different philosophies on the importance, implementation, and value of integration, and there is no standard on its implementation, other than it appears that the decision of how much integration a student receives, if any at all, is based on the desires of the parents and families of the student with severe disabilities.

Table 2.011 displays the amount of integration provided to students with severe disabilities by agency type. Students with severe disabilities that were served within the LEAs and special school districts received more integration with non-disabled peers than students served by the SSSH. At least 88% of students with severe disabilities served within a LEA were integrated on a weekly basis, with 26% integrated more than two hours per week.

Eighteen percent of the students with severe disabilities that were served through the SSSH were integrated on a weekly basis, with 11% integrated less than 30 minutes per week. Of the students that were reported as being integrated by the special school districts, 34% were integrated more than 2 hours per week. Table 2.012 displays the breakdown of integration levels by each educational agency.

Table 2.011: Total Integration Levels by Educational Agency Type

	LEA		Special School Districts		SSSH	
Students Served	273		475		1,093	
Less than 30 minutes per week	79	28.9%	4	0.8%	115	10.5%
30-60 minutes per week	33	12.1%	2	0.4%	29	2.7%
60-90 minutes per week	40	14.7%	7	1.5%	11	1.0%
90-120 minutes per week	18	6.6%	5	1.1%	23	2.1%
120+ minutes per week	70	25.6%	160	33.7%	18	1.6%
Not Reported*	33	12.1%	297	62.5%	897	82.1%

Source: Table contains data reported by individual LEAs for purpose of this study. Data was reported to LAN Resources, LLC.

* Data included for "Not Reported" consists of the students that did not receive an integration level.

TABLE 2.012: Number and Percent of Levels of Integration for Students with Severe Disabilities by Individual Educational Agency for Academic Year 2005-06.

	Students Served	Less than 30 minutes per week		30-60 minutes per week		60-90 minutes per week		90-120 minutes per week		120+ minutes per week		Not Reported	
Blue Springs	21	1	4.8%	9	42.9%	4	19.0%					7	33.3%
Bolivar	26	7	26.9%	2	7.7%	15	57.7%					2	7.7%
Cameron R-I	5							3	60.0%	2	40.0%		
Columbia	26	9	34.6%	7	26.9%	3	11.5%					7	26.9%
Dallas County RI	14			7	50.0%	3	21.4%			4	28.6%		
Dunklin R-5	3					3	100.0%						
Fort Zumwalt	8	5	62.5%					1	12.5%	2	25.0%		
Fox C-6	6	5	83.3%			1	16.7%						
Francis Howell	32							1	3.1%	31	96.9%		
Holden RIII	4	3	75.0%					1	25.0%				
Hollister R-V	3					1	33.3%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%		
Kirksville R-III	6	2	33.3%							4	66.7%		
Lamar R-I	6							5	83.3%	1	16.7%		
Lebanon RIII	7											7	100.0%
Lincoln County R-III	6									6	100.0%		
Logan-Rogersville R-8	5	4	80.0%							1	20.0%		
Northwest R-I	3	1	33.3%			2	66.7%						
Park Hill	3	2	66.7%					1	33.3%				
Raytown	4	3	75.0%									1	25.0%
Rolla 31	4	1	25.0%	2	50.0%	1	25.0%						
Savannah R-III	4									4	100.0%		
Seneca R-VII	5	1	20.0%							4	80.0%		
Springfield R-12	44	31	70.5%	6	13.6%	2	4.5%			5	11.4%		
St. Genevieve R-II	7					1	14.3%	6	85.7%				
Union R-XI	7	3	42.9%							4	57.1%		
Wentzville R-IV	9											9	100.0%
Windsor C-1	5	1	20.0%			4	80.0%						
Pemiscot Co Special School District	21							1	4.8%	20	95.2%		
St. Louis Special School District	454	4	0.9%	2	0.4%	7	1.5%	4	0.9%	140	30.8%	297	65.4%
State Schools for Severely Handicapped	1,093	115	10.5%	29	2.7%	11	1.0%	23	2.1%	18	1.6%	897	82.1%

Source: Table contains data reported by individual LEAs for purpose of this study. Data was reported to LAN Resources, LLC.
Notes: The column "Not Reported" uses the number of students that were not included in any of the five described integration levels.

Stakeholder Perception on Integration:

Data collected from the stakeholder surveys and focus groups indicated that parents of students with severe disabilities were the main force behind the amount of integration, if any, their child received on a weekly basis. Table 2.013 shows that parents of students that attend the SSSH feel there child received the "just right" amount of integration, while LEA parents felt their child did not receive enough integration.

While 68% of the parents with a student at the SSSH stated their child did not receive any integration, 20% of those that were integrated felt the amount was just right. Opinions stated during the focus groups made it clear that parents of SSSH students were comfortable with the amount of integration their child was receiving and it was often their choice to not have their child integrated at all with non-disabled peers. In fact, once they made the choice to have their child attend the state school, they very often requested that their child not receive integration back into their local home school.

Parents of students with severe disabilities that attended a LEA differed in their opinion. Thirty-seven percent stated their child was not integrated, while the majority of those that were integrated felt their child did not receive enough integration. Thirty-two percent of the LEA parents felt their child's integration was too little, while 24% stated it was just right. The focus groups confirmed that parents that choose to keep their child with severe disabilities at the LEA very often did so because they felt their child would benefit from the integration with non-disabled peers and in fact wanted their student to spend as much time in the regular classroom as possible.

The majority of the educators from both the LEA and the SSSH felt that students with severe disabilities received just enough integration.

Table 2.013: How do you feel about the amount of time your child spends in regular education classes with non-disabled peers?

		Too much	Just right	Too little	Don't know	No Integration
SSSH						
	Parents	1.1%	20.2%	3.2%	7.4%	68.1%
	Educators	3.9%	49.0%	13.7%	0.0%	33.3%
LEA						
	Parents	2.4%	24.4%	31.7%	4.9%	36.6%
	Educators	5.1%	53.8%	17.9%	5.1%	17.9%
Others						
	SSD Parents	8.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%
	Coop Parents	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%

Best Practices

Throughout the data collection process for various stakeholder groups, the following was described as being best practices for educating students with severe disabilities:

- Teach functional daily life skills as opposed to core, general education curriculum.
- Functional communication including alternative augmentative communication devices.
- Team planning, which includes input from all service providers; classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and the case managers.
- Community based instruction planned around vocational skills development.
- Integrated therapy in the classroom, as opposed to "pull-out" therapies.

Section 3: The Perception of the Benefits and Satisfaction with Missouri's Administrative Structure

Benefits of Administrative Structure

The Question(s):

"Do the various stakeholder groups believe Missouri's current administrative structures and services for students with severe disabilities are beneficial for students and families?"

Stakeholder Perception:

Although the majority of the data collected for this study focused on factual data concerning the placement of, the curriculum used with, the costs of serving, and the integration of students with severe disabilities throughout the state; another goal was to determine if the educational services provided to these students were beneficial to the students and their families?

Table 3.001 shows that each stakeholder group agreed that the educational services provided to students with severe disabilities was beneficial to the students and the families. Therefore, it did not matter if the student was served by a LEA, a cooperative, a special school district, or at a SSSH, at least 83% of the stakeholders agreed that the services provided were beneficial.

Table 3.001: The services provided to students with severe disabilities in Missouri are beneficial to the student and to their families.

		Mean	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
SSSH					
	Parents	4.30	85.9%	3.3%	10.9%
	Educators	4.70	92.0%	4.0%	4.0%
LEA					
	Parents	4.22	82.9%	9.8%	7.3%
	Educators	4.20	87.5%	0.0%	12.5%
Others					
	SSD Parents	4.42	83.3%	0.0%	16.7%
	Coop Parents	4.50	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

* Measured using Mean score. Means are based on a 5 point scale where 5.00 = Strongly Agree and 1.00 = Strongly Disagree.

One final objective of the study was to determine if parents and educators were satisfied with the different aspects of services provided to students with severe disabilities throughout the State of Missouri. Table 3.002 displays the results of several questions asked of the stakeholder groups. The following is a summary of the table.

Parents

When looking at the satisfaction levels of the services provided to students with severe disabilities, there were significant differences between parents of students attending a SSSH and parents with students attending a LEA. Parents of SSSH students were typically more satisfied than parents of LEA students. Satisfaction levels for parents of students attending a special school district or a cooperative were similar to those of the SSSH parents.

- At least 83% of the SSSH parents were satisfied with the special education services and the overall program provided to students with severe disabilities, while less than 70% of the LEA parents were satisfied.
- Just over half, 59%, of the LEA parents were satisfied with therapies provided to students with severe disabilities, while 80% of SSSH parents were satisfied with the therapies provided.
- 83% of the SSSH parents agreed the staff were appropriately trained to provide the required services, while 67% of the LEA parents agreed.
- There was just a slight difference in opinion of the parents when asked if they were a respected partner in the planning and implementation of the IEP process. Eighty-eight percent of the SSSH parents and 76% of the LEA parents agreed with the statement.
- More SSSH parents, 81%, agreed that the school addressed their concerns promptly and professionally than did LEA parents at 69%.

Educators

The results show that for the most part, educators from the LEA and the SSSH were consistent in their satisfaction. Some points to make include:

- Overall, 86% of the educators were satisfied with the overall program and the special education services provided to students with severe disabilities.
- Nearly 90% agreed the IEPs met the educational needs of students with severe disabilities and that the IEPs were effectively implemented by the schools.
- 95% of the LEA educators agreed they were a respected partner in planning and implementing the IEPs of student with severe disabilities, while 88% of the SSSH educators agreed.
- Overall, 90% of the educators agreed that the school addressed parents of students with severe disabilities concerns promptly and professionally.

Table 3.002: Stakeholder Satisfaction Levels with Services Provided to Students with Severe Disabilities*

	SSSH		LEA		Other	
	Parents	**Educators**	**Parents**	**Educators**	**SSD Parents**	**Coop Parents**
I am satisfied with the overall program that was provided.	83.2%	86.4%	66.8%	86.6%	83.4%	88.0%
I am satisfied with the special education services that were provided to students with severe disabilities.	86.0%	86.6%	68.8%	86.6%	85.0%	90.0%
I am satisfied with the assistive technology that was provided to students with severe disabilities.	80.4%	75.6%	63.0%	77.4%	73.4%	82.0%
I am satisfied with the therapy or therapies that were provided to students with severe disabilities.	80.0%	83.2%	58.6%	81.0%	70.0%	72.0%
The students with severe disabilities were accepted within the school community.	79.6%	75.0%	80.4%	84.8%	85.0%	86.0%
The staff was appropriately trained to provide the required services.	82.6%	84.4%	67.4%	84.6%	86.6%	90.0%
In general, students with severe disabilities' IEPs met their educational needs.	84.4%	89.8%	73.2%	88.6%	83.4%	90.0%
I feel I was a respected partner in the planning and implementation of the IEP process.	87.8%	87.8%	75.6%	94.6%	81.6%	88.0%
The students got to participate in school-sponsored activities (field trips, assemblies, and social events).	86.4%	82.4%	81.0%	90.8%	78.2%	88.0%
The students had the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities with non-disabled peers.	75.6%	63.2%	71.8%	78.4%	74.6%	72.0%
The students learned skills that will enable them to be as independent as possible.	77.6%	88.2%	65.0%	90.0%	66.6%	76.0%
The students learned skills that will carry over and be beneficial to their future life.	77.6%	87.8%	64.0%	86.6%	70.0%	82.2%
The school addressed parents of students with severe disabilities concerns promptly and professionally.	81.2%	90.4%	68.8%	90.2%	78.4%	86.0%
The students with severe disabilities' IEPs were effectively implemented by the school.	83.8%	89.0%	74.6%	88.6%	80.0%	86.0%

Notes: Overall satisfaction percentages calculated by dividing mean score by the overall possible. (mean score / 5.00 = satisfaction %)

In Summary

This report has shared data that attempted to answer the initial questions posed by DESE. The following are a list of those questions and their answers from the collected data:

1. In what type of placements do students with **mental retardation** receive their educational services? Do states appear to be consistent in their approach to where these students are served?

   Most states report that students with mental retardation receive their educational services in a regular educational setting being outside of the regular classroom more than 60% of the time. States do appear to be consistent in that almost all states serve 97% of their students with mental retardation in a regular educational setting. Only two states (Missouri and Maryland) served more than 10% of these students in a public separate facility.

2. What does the Missouri data tell us about placements for students with **mental retardation**? Is the Missouri data consistent with national data?

   The Missouri data shows that students with mental retardation are primarily (85%) served through a regular education setting. Missouri chooses to educate a higher percentage of students with mental retardation in a public separate facility than do most other states, but otherwise it is consistent with the national data.

3. What does the Missouri data tell us about placements for students with **severe disabilities**?

   The Missouri data tells us that students with severe disabilities are primarily (78%) served through a public separate facility.

4. Why do districts serve some students with **severe disabilities** and refer others to the State Schools for Severely Handicapped? Are there certain characteristics of students who are referred and those who are served by the district? Do any of the following play a role in the decision making process; parental preference, teacher training, location of the program?

   The majority of local school districts' philosophy is to serve students at the local level first, believing it is the least restrictive environment. However, if the student, due to medical or other physical issues, would be better served in the SSSH the district refers them. Districts also refer students to the SSSH when it is the parent's desire. As a student with severe disabilities ages, it is more likely that the value of the LEA diminishes and the student is referred to the SSSH.

   As mentioned above those that are served tend to be less medically fragile, have less behavior issues and have not reached puberty.

Parental preference – Absolutely. The parents' desire plays in intricate role in the decision.

Teacher training – This did not come up as playing a role in the decision making process, although many of the parents attending the focus groups stated that they chose the SSSH because they felt the staff was better trained to meet their child's unique and intense needs.

Location of the program – Although the length of travel to get to school was a concern, it was not a reason to select or not select the educational placement of a student. Instead the selection was based on what was the best place for that individual to be best educated for their future.

5. What service delivery models do other states use to serve the severe population? Are there trends that are seen in other states? Does district size influence how districts serve these students in other states? Do most states use special education cooperatives? Do these cooperatives operate separate schools? Do states have special funding for this population? Does the funding support certain models for service delivery?

    Many states offer a variety of administrative options as to how these students are served including regional cooperatives, multi-school cooperative districts, single district operations and or a state agency. These different administrations provide more options in terms of service delivery including self-contained classrooms, separate day facilities, and regular classroom with supports in that order.

    The main trend noticed was that states desire to provide a continuum of options so students with severe disabilities are best served no matter their individual situation; however, a self-contained classroom operated by the LEA was most frequently cited.

    State Directors did not state whether district size influences the best way to serve students with severe disabilities; however larger districts in Missouri tended to provide more options within the LEA than did smaller districts.

    Twenty of the 35 states or 57% of the states surveyed use special education cooperatives.

6. Are there significant differences in the program costs for students with **severe disabilities** based upon the administrative structure (local district, coop or State School for the Severely Handicapped)? Are their factors in each of the models that influence cost per child?

    There are differences in the program costs for student with severe disabilities when comparing agency type. Local districts spend an average of $24,500 per student with severe disabilities, while special districts and SSSH spend more than $30,000 per student. It should be noted that there are differences within the local districts. For example one school district spends $44,000 per student, while five districts spend less than $15,000 per student with severe disabilities.

7. Are there significant differences in the program curriculum or opportunity for integration based upon the administrative structure (local district, coop or State Schools for Severely Handicapped)?

    Yes. Students in local districts receive the most integration, followed by coops, while students at the SSSH receive the least integration. However, it should be noted that the SSSH does not provide more integration because the parents do not desire for it to occur for a variety of reasons, including student ridicule, transportation time and lack of overall value to their child's education.

8. Do the various stakeholder groups believe Missouri's current administrative structures and services for students with severe disabilities are beneficial for students and families? Are there differences in responses from parents served by local districts vs. served by State Schools for Severely Handicapped? Are there differences in responses from educators in districts that serve students with severe disabilities?

    The various stakeholder groups believe Missouri's current administrative structures and services for student with severe disabilities are beneficial for student s and families. SSSH parents tend to believe the services are more beneficial than LEA parents. Most responses are consistent overall, but there were pockets of the state where educators were less satisfied than others. This dissatisfaction was primarily driven by the administration that they worked under.

All of the data contained in this report has been presented in order to provide a fair, unbiased look at how the State of Missouri serves students with severe disabilities, how they compare to other states around the country and provide insight on the perceptions and opinions of educators and parents of students with severe disabilities. It is the intent of this report to fulfill the request of the Governor and the Commission and to encourage individual evaluation of how the resources in Missouri are being used to maximize the value to students with severe disabilities.

Attachment 1:

Best Practices Used When Serving Students with Serve Disabilities by Stakeholder Type

State Directors

- More integration of students with severe disabilities in accessing standards aligned with general education. Extended Standards for significant cognitive disabilities. More use of assistive technology.
- Focus on individualized care. Focus on direct daily instruction by a special Education teacher. Focus on services provided by person other than certified Special Education teacher that's supervised by Special Education teacher. Focus on multiple services (OT, PT, Speech, AT). Focus on collaborations between direct service providers and related services providers.
- Consistent with language and intent of IDEA - in the least restive environment in the school s/he would otherwise attend if not disabled - Cleary part of the "School community" even if separate instruction is needed for some or all of the day. IEP teams need to be better prepared to design services in the LRE and not simply place students in separate settings.
- Based on the student's PLEP, ensure access to the general education curriculum and opportunities to socialize with the same-age peers, with appropriate supports, in the least restrictive environment.
- Programming based on individual, always striving for regular education with supports as a first option for placement. Using the community a resource to meet the needs of students. Connections are continuously being made to post school outcomes. Using natural resources to support students as much as possible.
- Inclusive practices whenever possible.
- While our system relies on self contained classrooms at the local level results in high levels of integration, opportunities for specialized services are limited. We are considering allowing Special Education cooperatives to serve students with significant disabilities but the issue is more often how to serve children with Autism or ED (especially Bi-polar). Serving children with significant cognitive delays is generally not an issue.
- LEA responsibility provides better LRE options.
- Served in regular schools. Age appropriate when possible with adequate supports in regular classroom. Most are in the self-contained classrooms.
- It has been some years since we developed and distributed a Best Practice document around severe disabilities. We have seen increasing segregation around the state and less use of community based, ecological inventory and other best practices for developing salient programs in current and future environments. The establishment of Alternate Standards aligned to academic content based standards has focused instruction on academics fairly exclusively.
- Moving away from the free standing separate schools to classrooms in buildings where there are more opportunities to be with typical peers. In most of the separate schools there are students who leave the "center based" school and spend their days in regular schools. Many separate schools have renamed themselves as "programs" and the separate school is used in other ways and most of the children are served in buildings throughout the district. For example; in some districts a former separate school has become more of an early childhood center where districts can partner with Head Start.
- Family Centered Planning with focus on future outcomes. Collaborative training/inter-agency planning with defined roles and responsibility. Meaningful individualized programming infused with use of technology to promote access to curriculum and maximize student participation. Continuous program monitoring/student progress to access effectiveness. Integrated communities providing opportunities for learning.
- Intensive consideration of assistive technology.
- We have a team of regional consultants housed at the UVM UAP who support staff and families in supporting these students.
- We have just started a new effort for professional development for teachers.
- Extended curriculum standards and assessment tools aligned with progress monitoring systems and methods of measuring trends and growth over time.
- Collaborative and seamless community agency supports for transitioning youth and young adults.

- Total inclusion programs which include adult and student support and mentoring components.
- Effective Communication systems. Effective transition planning across the age span. Trained team members in all aspects of the disability.
- We provide grants to local school districts to increase options available in the least restrictive environment. We also provide training in the provision of supplemental aids and services in the regular classroom. We are developing a needs assessment which will be piloted this fall in several districts; it will then be used in all school districts. For the past 16 years, Pennsylvania has also had a Contingency Fund ("high risk pool"), that school districts can apply for in order to support some of their costs for high cost students. The Contingency Funds is state money, allocated based on the school district application and the amount of funds available.
- Individualized determinations, appropriate access to general education curriculum, opportunities for appropriate interaction with non disabled peers. Curriculum (academic and functional) that address the unique needs of each child.
- Full continuum of services, individually determined.
- Instructional practices that enhance the academic and functional skills of the students designed to meet individual needs. Inclusion, as much as possible, with non-disabled peers for academic and non-academic activities. Curriculum aligned to Alternate Content Standards that strive to achieve much higher expectations than we have ever seen in the past.
- When services are provided in neighborhood schools, in general education classrooms, sometimes a center-based classroom may be located there to provide support. Sometimes the few kids in rural schools may get support from a resource teacher. Additionally, the center-based program may be offered in a school that is not their neighborhood school, but support in general education classrooms can still be offered.
- Services provided to students with severe disabilities are based upon their Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed by a school team that includes professionals who have knowledge about the student and the student's strengths and needs, parents and other individuals who may have knowledge about the student. Local school systems offer a wide variety of special education services including related services, assistive technology and other supplemental aids and services as deemed appropriate by the IEP team. All students in Maryland participate in statewide assessment programs aligned with State content standards. Students with severe disabilities participate in Maryland's Alternate State Assessment (Alt-MSA). As a result, they receive instruction direction and access to Maryland's Voluntary State Curriculum. Maryland has a handbook for Alt-MSA for 2007, which includes suggested strategies for best instructional practices as well as guidance for the Alt-MSA. MSDE supports the work of the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education which provides technical assistance and professional development in Local School Systems for the enhancement of appropriate service provisions in inclusive settings.
- Case by case basis as determined by the Individual Education Program.
- Some districts with strong involving programs.

LEA Educators

- The practices that I have seen which seem best; Communication - using assistive technology and applied in practice or job related skills. Using computers with single switch or touch screens. Self Help - working on skills "as needed" and using assistive or adaptive techniques to enhance abilities (i.e. handles on zippers, potty chair with incentives). Students who show the greatest improvement are given lots of praise, encouragement and not allowed to give up without trying.
- Trying to incorporate life skills into everything involved in the student's day. I believe that a student can learn from any environment. If a student is in a regular education Math class, maybe the student is learning how to attend to one person (the teacher). I try to look for how to incorporate IEP goals no matter where the student is.
- Rewarding learner participation through instructor narration, self talk, nonverbal or verbal sounds, active learning strategies through games, peer teaching and simulations. Cooperative groups assignments, modeling and climate setting.
- In my classroom, parents are asked about their child participating in integration activities in their home school. Some parents want and like this option and others do not. Being in a program where therapists are in the building is helpful. I have tried to create a "typical" classroom environment for my students.
- In another district, students with severe disabilities were able to participate in community access activities, using school transportation. Students used their communication systems to make purchases and other social activities.
- Augmentative communication devices, life skills, and social skills. Everything is done as independent as possible.
- Opportunities to participate in both age appropriate and developmentally appropriate learning that is balanced and individualized.
- Columbia has district wide classrooms for students with severe disabilities. We bus students to one location to make one classroom of low functioning students. That way these students are in a group. All schools don't have one student with severe needs. About 1/4 of the schools have a classroom full of students. My school is very accepting of my students. We have jobs around the building such as helping put sack lunches together in the cafeteria. We also have 5th grade buddies who come down once a week to our room to provide good role models.
- The ability to be more independent through mobility and communication and through the use of technology.
- Functional skills are much more appropriate for severe handicapped population than core curriculum or Missouri standards. These children need life skills.
- Not a week goes by that a parent or someone else calls requesting "How do I get my child into OVLC." Life skills, integration activities with local component students.
- Being a teacher of the severely disabled population, we spend most of our time integrating students. Not through placing them in the regular school setting but through community based instruction activities to prepare them for being socially accepted by adults and peers in their adult life.
- The physical education is one that serves students well. But in the end the administration has pushed it off in a corner. The classroom teachers are aware of this and say they are not even treated like teachers.
- Functional communication. Alternative augmentative communication devices. Community based training, job training for half the school day provides students with necessary skills to transition to real life employment. School supports, real life community experiences; shopping at grocery stores; post office visits; restaurant dining, etc.
- Physical therapy and community based instruction
- Programs such as "Yes I Can" that provide opportunities for students with severe disabilities and non-disabled students to establish social relationships and true friendships. The Community-Based Instruction time spent in the community working on functional skills, job shadowing, and consumer skills, is very valuable, effective and should be increased. News-2-You is a character based weekly newspaper that is an excellent tool for reading, communication and accessing current events.

- Best practices that I have observed is team planning, continued conversations and planning that includes all service providers (OT, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, SLP and case manager). The team worked closely so that the student was included in classroom curriculum/activities. The student made tremendous gains.
- I can not express how important a functional curriculum with integrated community activities and participation in regular school activities has benefited our students.
- Students at FHNHS have community based integration (CBI) trips planned around vocational and pre-vocational skills development. The students have really benefited from CBI and the Student Based Enterprises and work experiences that they are able to partake.
- We have a large amount of community based learning experiences. The students are out and about in the community riding the metro-bus, shopping and attending events.
- Community based instruction, push-in services with a paraprofessional, work program on campus, adult life program at community college, Teen club after school, student based company.
- Helen Davis State School partners with the local public agency to collaborate and effectively integrate the district's students with severe disabilities into the local schools with non-disabled peers. Helen Davis provides a relevant, functional curriculum individualized for each student. In addition, our area State School offers integration into community settings, preparing students for meaningful interaction at all levels.
- Community access - thinking about future environment. Assistive technology, handling emotional parents effectively, willingness to be open minded to try/offer choice varieties as far as academic behavior supports/placements. Parents are a very integral part of our team.
- At our school, students are included in the daily on-site class offerings when they would otherwise have been placed in a State School type of setting. I feel that our program allows the maximum exposure possible for severely affected children. I actually like to think of our Challenge Program as an exemplary program which allows severely affected children the best of both worlds.
- The State School system IS the best practice for out students.
- Transition (work experience), Functional skills, Daily Living Skills (Laundry, cooking, applications, checking, etc.).
- ABA, Backward Chaining, Strong Transitional Programming, Strong Behavioral Supports, Integration with non-disabled peers, High Expectations.
- MAP-A alternative curriculum is being implemented, Life skills curriculum, State Schools Outreach as a Resource.
- A curriculum based on functional, daily-living skills.
- Keep them as normal as possible - include them any way and where you can.
- In the students daily routine they are guided through the steps of the task in a very through and consistent way. The teachers and staff truly work as a team to support the development of skills in these students. The staff in the classroom rotates through different tasks with all students so they stay fresh in their interaction.
- Students benefit being located in the building with non-disabled peers for opportunities of frequent integration and inclusion. They also need the protection of the supportive segregated setting with focus on orders to visit stores, build relationships and grow in a place where they can compete!
- Don't close the State Schools!!!! They provide a continuum of services for our very severely disabled students.
- Sensory Integrations/supports, Assistive Technology Utilization, Community Based Instruction, Community Based Vocational Instruction, Staff Certified Non-violent Crisis Intervention.
- Pool resources in the district. Maintain flexible environments that do not institute hard and fast rules regarding placement, opportunities for integration, IQ level, age level of students, etc. Collaborative times allowed for educators to share, discuss, plan and prepare for transition of students within the district who have a severe disability. Community based experiences utilized to the extent practicable for each individual child.

SSSH Educators

- Everyday I observe the use of many "best practices" at our state school and in my classroom. Providing several opportunities for choice making by using augmentative/alternative communication methods is an important part of our instructional day and all activities. I also emphasis communication techniques as a functional behavior support and as skills that all students can learn. Since all of my students are over 16 years of age, transition planning is an important pat of my students' IEP. I work closely with my students parents and help them in visiting day programs. Instructional planning and decisions are all data based and are used to improve student learning. Small group instruction is used with thematic based lessons and teaching strategies individualized to help each student participate and learn.

- Transition planning to meet the student needs. We support challenging behaviors, off campus instruction assists the students in community needs.

- State schools excel in the use of the adaptive equipment and augmentative communication devices. Off campus instruction is used to reinforce classroom instruction.

- I really like the use of various types of switches to assist non-verbal students with communication. I also like the integrated therapies for groups and cooking projects.

- Group instruction, use of technology and AAC within instruction, integrated therapy, data driven instructional decisions, prompts/cues, and community based instruction. Task analysis and teaching progressions, school and family collaboration. Students are engaged in problem solving. We have regular large group instruction activities where students are taught individual skills, while learning key social skills that will serve them post secondary in the world/community at large.

- Many of our students, especially those referred from public school, have not had good experiences in the educational system. I have attempted to create an atmosphere in our classroom that is conducive to learning. If you are trying to teach numbers and/or one to one classes, you first need to gain the student's attention. By using a board game during recreation/leisure the student's roll the dice and count the dots then move the appropriate spaces. There are also other functional skills being learned, colors, taking turns, math skills, and making choices.

- State Schools have staff trained to meet the educational needs, physical needs and communication needs of students with severe disabilities. The ratio of students to staff is 2 to 1. This ratio provides excellent support for all educational needs. Excellent training and support are available to State School staff to provide specialized instruction and care. Speech therapists, teachers, and other supervisors work diligently to develop and to implement communication systems. A nurse is on staff to provide support to parents and staff. These are appreciated by parents as well as teachers because many students have unique, complicated medical conditions.

- Collaborative teaching, assistive technology being used appropriately, teaching resources readily available to staff, etc.

- Parents are treated fair with respect.

- My students use our community as a great resource. We study current topics and then go into the community to see the subject up close. In September we studied "Football," a popular gathering for the whole community. We learned to read football words, tried on jerseys, helmets and shoulder pads, invited a local college football team to "practice" with us. We made a book about football. Each student got their own book, practiced reading it at school and then took it home. We wanted to go to the high school field but because of construction it was inaccessible.

- Technology; constant commitment to change and creativity. Aligning our students to the standards for all students. This includes providing us the same pay scale, Internet and basic support. We are as important as public school teachers and our efforts should be recognized as well as challenged to do better.

- I feel the State Schools better for educating students with severe disabilities than the public schools.

- Providing multiple opportunities throughout the educational classroom day to practice ADLS (Activities of Daily Living) in an authentic learning situation. Opportunities to communicate with peers and instructional staff using a multi-model approach.

- Co-treatment with therapists to provide optimal learning, creative lesson plans to enhance learning, individualized programs, and Trans-disciplinary approach to enhance generalization of skills. Implementation of skill areas not usually addressed in public school - "eating," "grooming," etc.

Attachment 1

Incorporation of ordinary learning - geography, math, or a functional basis or just to introduce students to a variety of experiences. One student I went to integration with benefited greatly from that experience. Others do not appear to benefit.

- Giving a picture schedule to communicate the need to change activities. Expecting children to communicate needs on choices and providing the means for communication. Expecting and allowing children to make choices throughout their day. Teaching for a reason behind behaviors and what is he attempting to communicate with it. Allowing natural consequences to follow behavior, either good or bad, and using consistently.
- Fun and relevant thematic units. Integration with peers of the same age. Off campus instruction at local restaurants/stores to teach generalization of skills taught at school. Hands on learning. Related services integrated into the daily schedule in the classroom.
- Our students are provided with the target skills embedded within their curriculum. IEPs goals are monitored constantly for progress. Functional skills are the focus of students' goals, not so much academics.
- Authentic assessments and data based instructional adaptations; functional life skills curriculum designed to teach life skills; current teaching techniques including fading and prompt hierarchy, task analysis and charming; integrated therapy; group instruction; community based instruction; transfer of skills; integration; behavioral supports; dramatic planning; assistive technology; alternative augmentative communication; choice making, development of school and family partnerships; and job training.
- Authentic instruction is an essential part of our students' day. Daily living skills that will assist our student's abilities to work towards independence are a major focus as well as behavioral supports in and out of the classroom. Students are able to practice these skills in the community with non-disabled peers as they participate in off campus activities. In the classroom, small group instruction is often used so that the students can interact with and learn from each other.
- I believe that it is most appropriate to select the best practice that best fits both the student and the situation of skill.
- I have only worked in SSSH for 1 year. I previously worked in a public elementary school where the total focus for all students was academic progress, not functional, daily living skills for the students with severe disabilities.
- The best practice is integrated therapy. I provide instruction for students whose disabilities range from deaf/blindness to autism to mentally/physically disabled. My classroom staff and I work very close with the therapists to ensure skills are being taught within the context of the classroom and other school environments. We do not have "pull-out" therapy sessions as exists in other systems when a therapist work one-on-one in a therapy room "practicing" the skills. My students use the skills they are learning everyday with the staff/therapists and we talk to each other about the progress and/or difficulties each student displays. Recently I was explaining this practice at an IEP meeting to a parent whose child had enrolled this year. She stated that is how it should be. She said that that is not the way it is done in the public school setting. I could continue to give examples of best practice that are implemented in my class but I choose to end my answers with a question. If our system is providing the best education under the law, why would anyone question our program's existence?
- State School students are taught skills in multiple settings to be able to learn skills they can use for life.
- There are many "best practices" that benefit our students: Consistency; safe environments; authentic teaching; skill based learning; transitioning; generalizing; off-campus instruction; diversity awareness and acceptance.
- Data-based instructional adaptations, using and fading prompt hierarchy, integrated therapy, small group instruction, task analysis, community based and assistive technology.
- One of the best curriculum for severely handicapped in Missouri. Off campus services for our students. Effective supportive service such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. The professional staff is very knowledgeable.

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- Students learn skills in the classroom and then learn to generalize them through off campus instruction in the community. The students learn to communicate their wants and needs either verbally or with a communication device. Students do on the job training for a vocational assessment by working 2 hours a week as Harvesters. Our students work along side normal high school students.
- Direct service for therapies. PE is adapted for the student's needs. Multi-implementers to accomplish goals, generalization of skills, equipment for communication skills, Assistive Technology are available.
- Team teaching, Students working in small group settings, students pairing off in activities, more thematic unit teaching, writing skills expanded to invoke creative writing.
- Best practices in our school include a functional curriculum with many opportunities to participate in the community. Integration is offered to every student but some parents feel that it is not appropriate for their child.
- Perhaps Co-ops could be formed with rural and small school districts.
- Group PE games, individual goals and benchmarks on student IEPs. We have excellent adaptive equipment for PE, PT and OT.
- Students go to school with peers with their own abilities. They are not shunned or looked at "in a funny way." The curriculum is geared to things that are functional and will prepare them for the future.
- Other districts and states provide mobility and gross motor equipment more freely. If districts have to provide extracurricular activities equally for disabled as they do for non-disabled student's activities, then we are getting shorted on funding for that equipment. Special Olympics are excluded from these types of activities!!!
- We work in small group settings and teach in small steps.
- Students in the State Schools have a wonderful setting in which to learn. The staff truly loves the students and accepts them unconditionally. We have screamers, runners, poopy diapers on adults (students), etc. but in our setting our focus is to accept them as they are and do everything possible to teach them more acceptable behaviors and how to achieve their individual potential. I believe all of the teachers and teacher aides I've seen go the extra mile. When possible students go on outings to Wal-Mart, public schools and the YMCA to learn appropriate behaviors. Some students however can't do that because they could be a danger to themselves and others.
- Authentic Assessment, Functional Analysis of Challenging Behavior, Essential Skills Life Learning, and Integrated Therapy.